

PRESS RELEASE: July 13th, 2016

Garden for pollinators and do your bit to save Ireland's bees

Guidelines for how to make gardens pollinator friendly are now available from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Twenty practical, low-cost actions are suggested that gardeners can take to make their outdoor space a haven for Ireland's declining bees. The suggested actions for gardeners include: planting pollinator friendly flowers that bloom from March through October, mowing lawns less often to allow wildflowers to bloom and reducing pesticide use in gardens.

www.biodiversityireland.ie/pollinator-plan

Waterford, July 13th, 2016: Unfortunately, Irish pollinators are in decline, with one third of our 98 bee species threatened with extinction. On the 17th September 2015, Ireland joined a small number of countries in Europe who have developed a strategy to address pollinator decline and protect pollination services. More than sixty-eight governmental and non-governmental organisations have agreed the shared Plan which identifies 81 actions to make Ireland pollinator friendly. It involves everyone from farmers, to councils, local communities and businesses doing their bit. Today it is the turn of all of us to help by making our gardens pollinator friendly.

"If you're a pollinator, finding enough food is the biggest challenge you have to face." said Dr Úna FitzPatrick from the National Biodiversity Data Centre, who chaired the Plan Steering Group. She added "gardens can play a crucial role by acting as pit stops for busy bees as they try to move around the landscape."

Habitat loss and declines in wildflowers are subjecting our pollinators to starvation. Our tendency to tidy up the landscape rather than allowing wildflowers to grow along roadsides, field margins, and in parks is also playing a big part in fewer of these resources being available. By making your garden pollinator friendly you can do your bit to help redress the balance and make sure that pollinators are protected.

By taking simple actions, your garden can become a place where honeybees, bumblebees and solitary bees can find food. Some solitary bees might even make their tiny little nests there. The most important thing you can do in your garden is to ensure you have some bee friendly flowers in bloom from March to October. "Comfrey, Lungwort, Lavender, Catmint, and Heather are all great food sources for bees" said Dr Erin Jo Tiedeken, who is the project officer for the All-Ireland Plan. Cutting your lawn slightly less often to allow wildflowers like dandelions and clovers to grow is another simple, low cost action you can take. It's also important not to use pesticides that are harmful to pollinators.

The guidelines show exactly what a pollinator friendly garden looks like, and even describe how to make your garden "gold standard" for pollinators. The suggested actions are based on scientific research, and are the measures that are most likely to benefit Irish pollinators. A range of actions are listed, in order to suit gardens of any size. Whether a garden has just a few window boxes or is a large community allotment, if it contains pollinator friendly flowers it can provide food for hungry bees.

If you grow strawberries, raspberries, beans, courgettes, or tomatoes you'll know first-hand how important it is that pollinators visit your garden. Without enough bees visiting the flowers, you see

reduced yields or misshapen fruit and vegetables. “We expect bees to be there when we need them, but in order for bees to survive they have to have enough food year round.” added Dr Tiedeken. The implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is being coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre with funding provided by The Heritage Council and Bord Bia.



NOTES FOR EDITOR

A Gardens Guidelines media pack including photographs and infographics from the document (*Gardens: Actions to Help Pollinators*) has been prepared and is available here: www.biodiversityireland.ie/pollinator-plan

FACTS:

- Guidelines for how to make gardens pollinator friendly are now available from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- One third of our 98 bee species are threatened with extinction in Ireland
- The annual value of pollinators for human food crops has been estimated at €53 million in the Republic of Ireland
- Pollination services are worth over £7 million per annum for apples in Northern Ireland
- Declines in wildflowers are subjecting our pollinators to starvation
- Our tendency to tidy up our lawns rather than allowing wildflowers to grow reduces the food bees need to survive
- Gardens can remain colourful **and** be pollinator friendly by selecting trees, shrubs and perennials that are good sources of pollen and nectar for bees. These include Comfrey, Lungwort, Lavender, Catmint, Heather, and many more.
- The Garden Guidelines include an info sheet that can be provided to property management companies or residents associations to encourage pollinator friendly management of apartments and estates.

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About the National Biodiversity Data Centre:

The National Biodiversity Data Centre, is a national organisation for the collection, collation, management, analysis and dissemination of data on Ireland's biological diversity. Biodiversity data are a key requirement for understanding our natural surroundings, for tracking change in our environment and for gaining a greater insight on how we benefit from, and impact upon, the ecosystem goods and services provided by biological diversity; a national asset which contributes at least €2.8 billion to the Irish economy each year. The Data Centre was established by the Heritage Council in 2007 and is funded by the Heritage Council and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>

Dr Úna FitzPatrick joined the National Biodiversity Data Centre as an ecologist when it was established in 2007. She has been working on plants and pollinators for 15 years and set up the Irish Pollinator Initiative in 2008 to drive pollinator conservation through better data. She chairs the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan steering group and co-ordinates implementation of the Plan.

Dr Erin Jo Tiedeken joined the National Biodiversity Data Centre in April 2016 as the Project Officer for the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. She previously studied Irish pollinators with Dr Jane Stout at Trinity College Dublin, and has been studying or working on bees for the past six years.